

WASHINGTON, DC -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (D-CA) introduced legislation today to make it easier for consumers to seek compensation for damages resulting from faulty products made overseas. The Protecting Americans from Unsafe Foreign Products Act will be the subject of a legislative hearing on Thursday in the Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law, chaired by Congresswoman Sánchez.

The bill would make it easier for consumers to bring into American courts foreign manufacturers who export defective products. Under the new law, Americans could serve foreign manufacturers with documents where they reside, are found, have an agent or transact business. The changes relax cumbersome requirements which sometimes required Americans to travel to foreign countries or translate documents simply to initiate the suit.

"If you or your family have been hurt by an imported product, you should not have to jump through hoops to hold the responsible foreign manufacturer accountable," Congresswoman Sánchez said. "This bill shows we stand behind American consumers and not the foreign manufacturers that produce defective products that are flooding the U.S. market."

Congresswoman Sánchez began work on the bill in November 2007 after holding a hearing on imported toys recalled because of lead paint contamination and other dangerous defects (see the hearing here: <http://judiciary.house.gov/oversight.aspx?ID=395>). Recently, heparin, an imported blood thinner, caused 81 deaths and many more injuries. In addition to highlighting the hurdles facing consumers who seek to hold foreign manufacturers accountable, the hearing also revealed that while the United States is opening its borders to increased free trade, staff shortages at the Consumer Product Safety Commission are preventing effective screening of imported products.

"It's important that foreign manufacturers are held to the same product safety standards we expect American manufacturers to meet," said Congresswoman Sánchez. "If we fail to do this, then we're giving foreign companies an advantage, making it more difficult for domestic industry to compete and keep jobs in America."

House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-MI), Reps. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Steve Cohen (D-TN), and Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) are original cosponsors of the Protecting Americans from Unsafe Foreign Products Act.